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AUTHOR Henderson, David L.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

A study summarized the voting patterns to form a political profile of Texas teachers. A questionnaire was sent to 500 teachers who were members of the Texas State Teachers Association in 1983. General information was collected on nineteen characteristics of teachers, including such categories as sex, marital status, place of birth, place of residence, and political contributions. The most significant findings were: 36 percent of the teachers did not live in the school district in which they taught; and, 76 percent of the teachers voted for the candidates endorsed by the professional association. Implications are briefly discussed and responses are summarized in tabular format. (JD)

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POLITICAL PROFILE AND VOTING PATTERNS OF TEXAS TEACHERS

David L. Henderson
Charles E. Darby
Karen L. Henderson

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David L. Henderson is an Associate Professor in the Division of Teacher Education at Sam Houston State University. He has an Ed.D. from Texas Tech University, M.Ed. and B.A. from West Texas State University. Dr. Henderson's teaching responsibilities include Educational Research, Computer Literacy, Educational Measurement, Teaching Methods, and Supervision of Student Teachers.

Charles E. Darby is a retired Professor from Sam Houston State University's Division of Teacher Education. He has a Ph.D. from Texas A & M University and a M.Ed. from Sam Houston State University. His primary teaching responsibilities were in Supervision and School Administration.

Karen L. Henderson is a Lecturer in the Department of Mathematics and Information Sciences at Sam Houston State University. She has a M.Ed. from Sam Houston State University and a B.S. from West Texas State University. Her teaching includes Computer Literacy, College Algebra, Calculus, and Individualized Algebra Lab.

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POLITICAL PROFILE AND VOTING PATTERNS OF TEXAS TEACHERS

Abstract

A questionnaire was mailed to 500 teachers from a systematic sample of 100,000 teachers who were members of the Texas State Teachers Association in 1983. General information was gathered on nineteen teacher characteristics. The most significant results follow: 1) that 36% of the teachers do not live in the school district in which they teach and 2) that 76% of the teachers voted for the candidates endorsed by the professional association. These two facts have strong political implications in local school elections.

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POLITICAL PROFILE AND VOTING PATTERNS OF TEXAS TEACHERS

Introduction

The political activity and voting behavior of the electorate has always been of considerable interest to political scientists and is currently becoming of great interest to politicians and teacher organizations as they are actively involved in lobbying, planning, and funding for the benefit of education. Raywid (1964, p.27) stated that schools must "...concede what American educators have never been willing to concede: that public schooling is an intensely political question."

Bailey (1962) seemed to be writing for today as he said that the future of public education depends on schoolmen getting into politics in such a way that educational needs can be translated into effective policy. Marden (1965) observed that local districts get the most funds when school leaders are effective in politics. Now it appears that this is especially true at the state level as evidenced by the actions of the 1983 Texas Legislature related to teacher salaries, funding, tax rollbacks, and essential elements (Texas House Bill 72).

U.S. News and World Report (1982) reported that in the United States, 169.3 million citizens were eligible to vote but the national turnout was only 33%. By race, 47.3% of the

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whites, 37.2% of the Blacks, and 23.5% of the Hispanics voted. An age profile for percent voting showed the following: ages 18-24 (23.5%), ages 25-44 (43.1%), ages 45-64 (58.5%), and ages over 65 (55.9%). As expected, educational level was a factor in the voting percentages: grade school (34.6%), high school (42.5%), some college (51.5%), and college graduate (63.9%).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to summarize the voting patterns and to form a political profile of Texas teachers. A Political Survey Questionnaire (PSQ) was designed and pretested at the 1968 Sam Houston State University Curriculum Workshop. Fifty-five items were included in the original PSQ. Nineteen characteristics of teachers were surveyed in this and the original study in 1968 by Charles E. Darby (1970). The nineteen characteristics included such categories as sex, marital status, place of birth, place of residence, political contributions, etc.

The revised PSQ was mailed in May of 1983 to a systematic sample of 500 teachers selected by computer from the Texas State Teachers Association membership list of 100,000 teachers. The return rate was 60%.

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Voting Profile of Texas Teachers

Table 1 is a summary of the dicotamous data. The average Texas teacher is a female 30-39 years of age, has taught 10-19 years, is a native Texan but was not born nor reared in the school district in which she teaches.

She has a Bachelor's degree and lives in her school district, attended a public college, is a member of 2-3 professional organizations, is married, is of European lineage, is a Protestant, and teaches elementary school.

She was eligible to vote and did vote in the 1983 school board election, was politically inactive in the elections, voted in the 1982 November general election, voted a split ticket, voted for Mark White, identifies with the Democratic party, and classifies herself as middle-of-the-road politically.

The Texas teacher has not been a delegate to a political convention, contributes money to candidates but not to political action committes (PAC), has not run for office, has not worked in a political campaign, has contacted her state representative or state senator in the past two years, has not ever been elected to political office, voted in the primaries, believes present and new teachers applying for new certificates should take competency tests, is aware of the tax rollback situation and voted for candidates endorsed by her professional association.

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Analysis of Data

The ratio of male and female teachers is consistent with another state-wide study (Henderson, 1982). Four-fifths of the teachers were not born nor reared in the school district in which they teach. Ninety-five percent of the teachers indicated they voted in the 1982 November general election. This percentage greatly exceeded the population as a whole and it must be remembered that the results were from a self-reporting questionnaire. Approximately one-half of the teachers contributed money to political campaigns in 1982. Two significant political facts are shown in the table. The first is that 36% of the teachers do not live in the district in which they teach. The political implications regarding lack of participation or interest in local elections by "absent" teachers should not be overlooked by school administrators. Second is the endorsement of candidates by a professional organization was apparently effective because 76% of the teachers indicated they voted for the endorsed candidates. Teachers' power at the voting boxes was evident by the support and election of Mark White over Bill Clements as Governor of Texas in 1982. Teachers' political power is apparently a factor to be reckoned with in Texas.

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Table 1

Summary of Political Profile

Question	Response	Number	Percent
Sex	M-F	58 - 220	20.0 - 79.1
Native Texan	Yes-No	197 - 81	70.9 - 29.1
Born/Reared in District	Yes-No	51 - 227	18.3 - 81.7
Live in District	Yes-No	179 - 99	64.4 - 35.6
Eligible to Vote	Yes-No	257 - 21	92.4 - 7.6
Voted in Board Election	Yes-No	182 - 96	65.5 - 34.5
Voted in General Election	Yes-No	264 - 14	95.0 - 5.0
Delegate to Convention	Yes-No	20 - 258	7.2 - 92.8
Contribute Money	Yes-No	149 - 29	53.6 - 46.4
Contribute to PAC	Yes-No	133 - 145	47.8 - 52.2
Run for Political Office	Yes-No	6 - 272	2.2 - 97.8
Work in Political Campaign	Yes-No	101 - 177	36.3 - 63.7
Contact State Rep. or Senator	Yes-No	163 - 115	58.6 - 41.4
Elected to Political Office	Yes-No	5 - 273	1.8 - 98.2
Normally Vote in Primaries	Yes-No	240 - 38	86.3 - 13.7
Current Teachers' Test	Yes-No	154 - 124	55.4 - 44.6
New Teachers' Test	Yes-No	192 - 86	69.1 - 30.9
Aware of Tax Rollback	Yes-No	171 - 107	61.5 - 38.5
Voted for Endorsed Candidates	Yes-No	211 - 67	75.9 - 24.1

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